

The

April 2004

Ballarat Naturalist



Trailing Goodenia
Goodenia lanata
(Club Logo)

President's Report 2003-2004

Following last year's crowded timetable it has been almost a relief to return to the normal programming of monthly lectures and excursions, and the occasional mid-month activity! Matters which have continued through to this past year included further discussion with DSE and The Forest Resort, with John Gregurke and myself representing the club to discuss plans for the leased block and our preferred choice for the land swap - a block at Carlisle River adjoining the Otway National Park. John and Greg Binns have attended meetings of the Lake Burrumbeet Advisory Committee, a follow-on from the draft Lake Master Plan.

Shop sales of *Discovering Ballarat's Bushland* have continued, and individual members also continue to sell copies. Of the 1000 copies printed, over 700 have now been sold and the loan from the VFNCA repaid in full. As a result of the sales we have been able to make donations of \$500 to each of:

- the Trust for Nature's Ned's Corner Appeal, and
- the Australian Bird Environment Foundation (BOCA).

Members continue to be interested in what we have come to call "Field Nats. Island" in the North Gardens Wetland. Upon being advised of a weed problem we undertook a working bee in May, removing tree guards and stakes from the well-grown shrubs planted two years previously and planting additional ground cover.

Mid-year a new Ph.D student from Canada arrived to conduct his own research on Lake Wendouree's Musk Ducks and to continue monitoring the swans for the Zoology Department of Melbourne University under the supervision of Raoul Mulder. John Gregurke and I have provided field assistance as Patrick Guay attempted to devise ways of capturing, banding and identifying individual Musk Ducks - with varying degrees of success! Falling Lake levels have not helped the work, although it was very

pleasing to see the swans successfully breeding again after last year's absence of nests.

Syllabus items this year reflected some of the ecological concerns near to home such as bushfires, salinity and invasive weeds; we were pleased to have Ern Perkins speak on the Box-Ironbark Forests in the wake of the proposed new and extended National Parks. With some recent controversy over the spread of wind farms locally we were fascinated by Alan Ford's enthusiastic discussion of Sustainable Living, while the development and rehabilitation of wetlands was the subject of the Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture. Other locally based speakers discussed the monitoring of long term changes in ecology related to climate change, the natural history of Flinders Island, the operation of the Land for Wildlife system, and the national meeting of Field Naturalists in Launceston.

Several excursions followed up these topics, while others were more relaxed such as the visit to the Ballarat Bird Park, Geelong Botanic Gardens and a stroll in Hepburn Regional Park. Visits to properties such as Eynesbury, a large grazing property, and a small block at Linton illustrated the importance of conservation by private landholders, an issue which was discussed by a speaker from Trust for Nature.

Extra activities included a visit to Lake Burrumbeet to look at the rich and interesting variety of birds seen there as a result of abnormally low lake levels. A real one-off event was the visit to the Ballarat Observatory in August on the night when Mars was at its closest point to Earth; we enjoyed an illustrated presentation on the topic, then jostled with the crowds to peer through the various telescopes.

Attendance at meetings has been very encouraging, with 28-40 members on the Friday nights and up to 20 on excursions.

Our club campout at Stuart Mill in September attracted 10 members who were intrigued by the newly built mudbrick accommodation but less impressed by the bitter wind and temperature on the Saturday when back in Ballarat and Daylesford it snowed! However the box-ironbark ecosystems provided plenty of interest throughout the weekend.

Eight members attended the Portland VFNCA (now SEANA) campout held at Cape Bridgewater in October; highlights included entry to the gannet colony on Pt. Danger and rare orchids on the Sea Cliff walk.

In January the Victorian Nature Photography Group extended an invitation to Field Naturalists to join them at their alpine camp at Perisher Valley; photography members Carol Hall and Greg and Genny Binns were joined by five FNCB members and all were interested in the regeneration of the region after the fires of January 2003.

Kay Preston is stepping down from the committee and we thank her for her support during her time with us.

After three very enjoyable years for me in the chair I am vacating the position: it is time for a change, for fresh impetus and new ideas. I thank all the members of the committee for their input, and in particular John, Greg and Claire who have throughout provided rock-solid support; this has been by far the most friendly, positive and efficient club committee I have worked with.

Carol Hall.

Members' Presentations

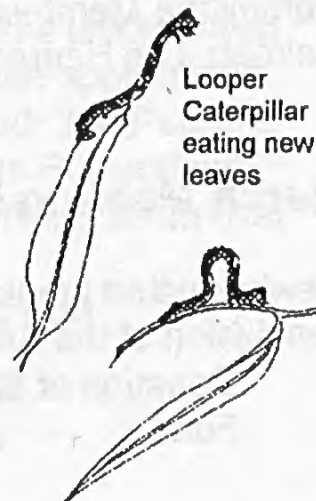
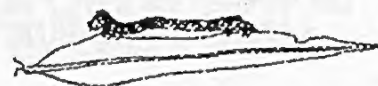


Trigger Plant

The theme for this year's slide show was *The High Country*, which members interpreted in a number of ways. The recent visit by members to Kosciuszko National park was the source of several sets of images: John Gregurke and Helen Burgess concentrated on the plants of the Kosciuszko alpine area while Claire and Peter Dalman took a broader look at the scenery and shared the hailstone experience with us; Greg Binns selected more unusual aspects such as the emergency shelter near Cootapatamba Creek which, when half buried in snow is accessed by a tall "chimney", and found some rock formations which he addressed as "rocks with attitude"! Carol Hall discussed the impact of the 2003 bushfires at Hotham, Buffalo and Kosciuszko, showed insects eating the eucalypt regrowth and explained the research being done to rehabilitate a sphagnum bog.

Val Hocking showed us the deep gorges, red with iron, of the Pilbara, while Lyndsay featured the desert formations of Central Australia—ending with the total contrast of snow at Mt. Buninyong! Ken Hammond also took us around the nation, drawing on his extensive travels over the years.

An appreciative audience enjoyed the informality of the evening's presentations and thanks must go to all who contributed images.



Looper
Caterpillar
eating new
leaves

Minutes of the 51st Annual General Meeting of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc.

Held at the Ballarat Horticulture Centre on the 12th March 2004.

Opening

1. President Carol Hall opened the meeting. She welcomed 38 members and visitors.
2. **Apologies** were received from Genni Binns, Margaret Martin, John Hughes and Frank Harrap. Apologies were accepted on the motion of Bill Murphy, Seconded Elspeth Swan.
3. **Minutes of the 50th AGM** were read and accepted on the motion of Lyndsay Fink, Seconded Helen Burgess.
4. **President's Report** was read by Carol Hall and is attached. Accepted on the motion of Carol Hall, Seconded Del McDonnell.
5. **Treasurer's Report** was presented by Bob Curtain. Accepted on the motion of Bob Curtain, Seconded Ken Hammond.
6. **The outgoing committee** was thanked by Bill Murphy and supported by acclamation. Special mention was made of Kay Preston who is not seeking re-election.
7. **Election of Office Bearers:** All positions were declared vacant and Bill Murphy took the chair for the election of Office Bearers. The following were elected unopposed:

President:	Peter Dalman
Vice President:	Carol Hall
Secretary:	John Gregurke
Treasurer:	Bob Curtain
Newsletter Editor:	Carol Hall

Committee Members: Greg Binns, Helen Burgess, Maureen Christie, Claire Dalman, Les Hanrahan, and Fran Hanrahan.

March Meeting Points

Newly elected president, Peter Dalman opened the general meeting at the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting.

- Donation of \$25 made to Australian Natural History Medallion Trust Fund.

- Trish and John Hughes have prepared an inventory of the books in the club library.
- Greg Binns reported that 6 Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat members attended the camp. A full report of the activities will be in the April edition of Ballarat Naturalist. Timboon FNC had organized an interesting program of excursions and guest speakers.
- Public Liability Insurance: That the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat affiliate with the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria and arrange public liability insurance with their group insurance scheme. Moved: Carol Hall, Seconded: Bill Murphy, Carried.

Show and Tell

- Helen Burgess: Brought along the frozen body of a Common Bronzewing which had been killed by colliding with a window.
- Carol Hall: Displayed the Autumn 2004 edition of *Nature Australia* which contains an article about the swans of Lake Wendouree and includes a photograph taken by Carol.
- Pat Murphy: Showed members a copy of *Indigenous Plants of Bendigo* produced by Bendigo Native Plant Group and City of Greater Bendigo.

Field Reports

- Eileen Anderson: Narrow-leaf Mallee and Tamar Wallaby on Kangaroo Island.
- Belinda Taylor: Praying Mantis on rose bush catching and eating bees. Enlargement of photograph revealed a fly eating the other end of the bee.
- Carol Hall: Royal Spoonbill in Fairyland area of Lake Wendouree. Six Australasian Shoveler. Blue-billed Duck and Great Crested Grebe observed with chicks. Lunette forming beneath cliff on eastern side of Lake Burrumbeet (slides taken).
- Claire Dalman: Family of Coots at Lake Gardens. The chicks dived and swam a considerable distance under water when approached.
- John Gregurke, Jack Netherway and Ken Hammond: 300 Pelicans and 2000+ Red-necked Avocet at a fast-drying Lake Burrumbeet.
- Ken Hammond: At least 1000 Long-billed Corellas flying south over Wendouree after sunset.
- Tony Edney: Pair of Brolga in paddock at Langi Kal Kal.

Excursion: Mineral Springs of Trentham and Lyonville

Leader: Greg Binns



Grey Fantail

Seven members set out to visit the smaller and less well-known springs of the spa region beyond Daylesford, lying between the Trentham and Malmsbury roads and surrounded by the northern outlier of the Wombat Forest. The area includes the headwaters of the Loddon River.

At Leitch's Spring we sampled the waters which were naturally aerated and had a distinctive magnesium content. Also dissolved in these waters are iron carbonates, calcium, sulphide minerals and chlorides. Back in December 1999 Julian Hollis told us that this region has one of the highest levels of background radiation thanks to the production of radon gas from decaying radioactive minerals (Newsletter Feb. 2000). Nearby were blackberry and elderberry bushes, the former offering an impromptu snack! Crimson Rosellas and Magpies flew through the tall Messmate Stringybarks nearby, while Superb Fairy Wrens fluttered around the "hedgerows".

Most of us had not visited Bullarto Reservoir before; it was a tranquil spot with Coots on the water and a Little Pied Cormorant perching on a buoy. The green sward around the edges was heavily grazed by kangaroos, and beyond was the Wombat Forest with Messmate, Manna Gum and Peppermint trees. Freshwater mussel shells and a dead big black yabby were interesting finds, while a Nankeen Night Heron feather gave a further clue to the local inhabitants. Large numbers of unidentified brown butterflies were present, and a tiny pale blue moth; Red Wattle Birds and Brown Treecreepers made their presence known and a Yellow Robin was seen, blending beautifully with the yellow-green of the many willows along the shore. There was little wind to disturb the water's surface.

At Lyonville Spring, flies were more obvious than birds! We paused for lunch, then turned off the Trentham road north on the Little Hampton road through the Forest and pulled up to inspect the bush. As the litter crackled loudly underfoot, we noticed dense stands of Silver Wattle, bracken and eucalypt saplings. Grey Fantails came to check us out and high up in the trees Brown-headed Honeyeaters chased around. There was a constant background "static" of thornbill and wren calls. Caught up in the peeling bark of the Manna Gums were cobwebs and gumnuts and leaves. A Grey Shrike-thrush was seen briefly; then as we wandered back to the vehicles a tiny White-lipped Snake, about 10cms long was seen basking on the warm track. Inspection revealed a white hairline on the side of its head and salmon-pink scales on its belly.

After pausing at Glenlyon Spring, noticeably sweeter than the previous waters, we visited Loddon Falls, devoid of falling water but flanked by a spectacular wall of po-

lygonal basalt columns whose joints were filled with grasses and tree roots. Some water remained in the plunge pool at the base of the falls and in another depression further downstream, but the lack of flowing water provided a good opportunity to admire the bed of the Loddon River above the falls where the tops of the basalt columns formed shallow steps. Greg found the skull of a Kookaburra, the beak distinctive and displaying large, deep nostrils. Alongside the access road were Rough-barked Manna Gums with unusually contorted limbs; their deep creamy colour glowed in the afternoon sunshine and contrasted with the blue of a cloudless sky. Some were covered in blossom, busy with insects: the scene was reminiscent of Keats' *Ode to Autumn* where Autumn, "close-bosomed friend of the maturing sun" conspires to

".....set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells."

. Carol Hall.



Subscriptions are now due!

Ordinary member	\$22
Family	\$36
Distant member	\$15
Student	\$12
Newsletter Postage For Ordinary Member or Family	\$6.50

Please pay Bob at your earliest convenience!

SEANA Autumn 2004 Campout



Little Penguin

The Timboon FNC hosted the South East Australian Naturalists' Association (formerly VFNCA) gathering during the weekend of March 5-8, centred on "Kangaroobie", overlooking the mouth of the Gellibrand River at Princetown.

Six FNCB members attended and experienced an enjoyable and varied programme. Approximately 80 participants had the choice of nine coastal and seven in the hinterland, and in spite of uncharacteristic dry conditions there were many good sightings and finds of fauna and flora. The sandy bushland reserves and coastal heathlands provided the best plant studies, particularly the Kennedy's Creek area with late summer orchids flowering. Lake Elingamite and Curdies Inlet provided good birding.

On Sunday at dusk there was the mandatory sortie to view the Little Penguins and Muttonbirds returning to their nesting colonies. Guest speakers gave informative presentations on Little Penguins and Bat research.

The Annual General Meeting of SEANA was conducted. Some changes to the constitution were adopted and committee of management elected. Dick Southcombe (Geelong) was re-elected as President and our John Gregurke (Ballarat) as Secretary. Ern Perkins (Castlemaine) has been appointed "Webmaster" and has developed a website for SEANA which contains much information for field naturalists. The address is <http://home.vicnet.net.au/-seana>, or from Google, search for VFNCA or SEANA+Naturalist.



Muttonbird

The Spring Campout 2004 is scheduled for October 29-November 2 at the Little Desert Lodge.

Greg Binns.



Worts and All.....!!

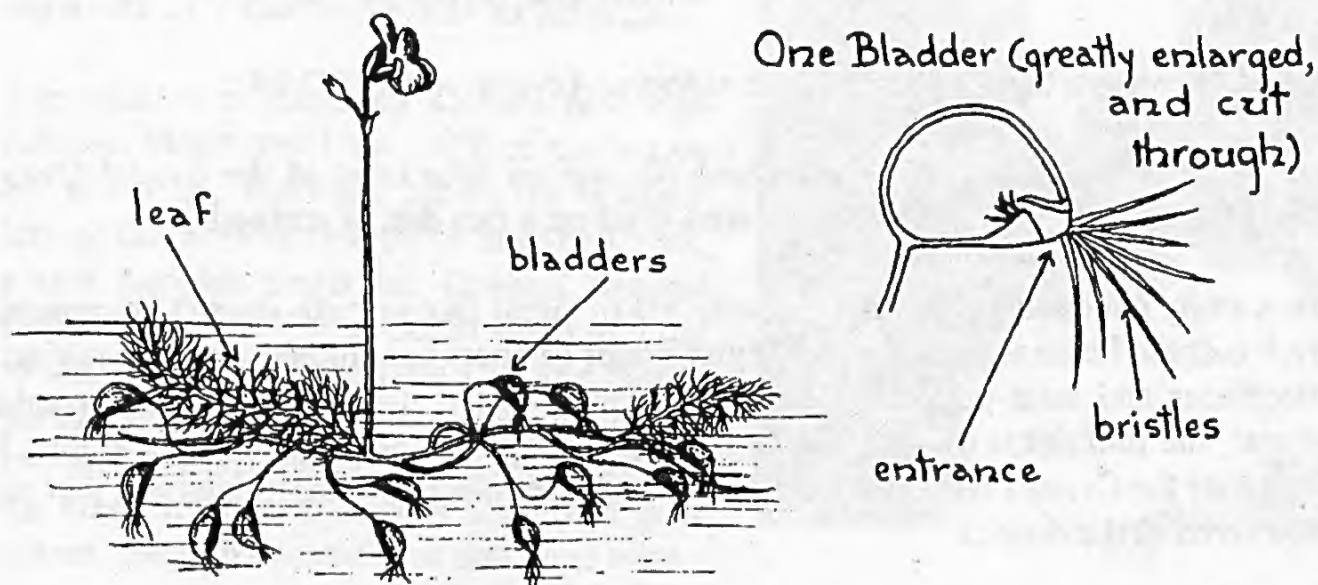
A query raised during a recent excursion prompted a little research to ascertain the meaning of "wort" in a number of plant names.

Wort is derived from the Old English *wyrt* meaning a root or plant. It is now mostly used in combination, as in a number of plants familiar to us. For example: Hairy Stylewort, the Raspworts, the Pennyworts, Ragwort, St. John's Wort, and Liverwort. There are others overseas such as Figwort, Colewort etc.

Greg Binns.

It was Prickly Starwort which covered extensive areas of ground burnt by the 2003 fires in the Kosciusko region and seen by several of us this last January.

Ed.



Bladderworts— insectivorous plants

Stop Press - more on "worts"

Roger Thomas has spotted Austral Mudwort *Limosella australis* (a small plant with tiny mauve-white, five-petalled flowers) taking hold on the receding shorelines of Lakes Wendouree and Burrumbeet, and Paul's Drain in Dowling Street. He feels that, since its seeds are not windborne, they must have been transported in mud sticking to the feet of waterbirds travelling between the various water bodies.

See this.....in the Otways (1)

Visitors to Stevensons Falls reserve, SW of Forrest, can now access the walking track and Falls on a new walker's bridge. Parks Victoria said the new 30m suspension bridge spanning the Gellibrand River at the Falls complemented a \$40,000 upgrade at the reserve, including new walking tracks, campground improvements, fencing and revegetation.

Floods extensively damaged the original bridge and due to public risk Parks Victoria removed the bridge over the Gellibrand River.

"We recognise the importance of Stevensons Falls to local tourism, its accommodation providers and visitors to the area and are delighted to be able to provide a bridge of such high quality here at this hidden gem of the Otway," ranger in charge Will Cox said.

See this.....in the Otways (2)

The following article appeared in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 18/3/04.

A new archaeological study has found Aborigines who lived in the coastal Otways were supreme divers and swimmers who lived on a rich diet of seafood.

In a study conducted to ensure the new 91km Great Ocean walk doesn't compromise rich cultural heritage sites, archaeologist Roger Lubbers has studied a host of middens, fireplaces and semi-permanent campsites where he has uncovered fresh information about the traditional owners. These findings go against the popular belief among locals that the Otways weren't a culturally significant place for Aborigines and that very few lived in the district.

In fact the region was home to some of the most densely formed deposits recorded in Victoria which showed hundreds of people lived there at any one time, in clan groups of between 100 and 150 people....focused exclusively on marine resources.

The region's high rainfall and enormous biodiversity allowed surprisingly intensive occupation of the area.....the local Aborigines would have been excellent swimmers to have dived to 8 or 9 metres in search of lobsters and abalone in waters that were often treacherous.

The eight day walk from Apollo Bay to Glenample Homestead has been partially re-routed to keep sites protected. The walk is due for completion next year but the first two-day section from Apollo Bay to Cape Otway is now open.

.....and more waterfalls

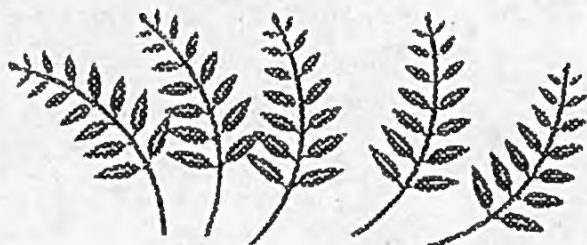
In The Age of 27/10/03 this article appeared, entitled

Deep in the Otways trekkers find lost waterfall.

(Summary) The find was made by 2 members of the Otway Ranges Walking Track Association while marking out the route of the proposed Trans-Otway Walk, a 4-day 70km trek between Lorne and Apollo Bay. One member named the falls Mousetrap Falls. Another believes the area, near Mt. Sabine off the Forrest-Skenes Creek Road, has the highest concentration of waterfalls anywhere in Victoria, possibly in Australia.

The walkers encountered a chain of 7 cascades in Mousetrap Falls but then the terrain got too steep. The Falls are on the headwaters of the western branch of Smythe Creek, which tumbles down the Otways' deepest valley, under the Great Ocean Road and out to sea. To get to these falls *The Age* had to suffer many undignified moments in the mud and wet; we scrambled down rocky slopes; we hiked on tracks marked only with pink ribbon, through tall treeferns and huge trees.

The Trans-Otway Walk—which will take at least a few million dollars to build—would connect with the Great Ocean Walk which runs from Apollo Bay to Port Campbell, and the Surf Coast Walk, which links Torquay to Lorne. All up, there would be more than 200 km of continuous walking track.



Calendar

April

- Fri. 2 Dr. Jan Watson: *Beneath the Waves—the marine life of Pt. Phillip Bay.*
 Sun. 4 Excursion: *Jubilee Mine Historical Area*—Leader Fran Hanrahan.
 Tues. 27 Committee Meeting @ Fran's, 7.30pm.

May

- Fri. 7 Meeting: Helen Burgess - *From Ecuador to Iguaçu.*
 Sun. 9 Excursion: *Macedon Ranges*—Leader John Gregurke.

Supper Duty:

April:
May:

Volunteers required.
Volunteers required.

Committee

President Mr. Peter Dalman
Vice-President..... Mrs. Carol Hall
Secretary..... Mr. John Gregurke
Treasurer..... Mr. Bob Curtain

Mr. Greg Binns
 Miss Helen Burgess.....
 Miss Maureen Christie.....
 Mrs. Claire Dalman.....

Mrs. Carol Hall (Editor).....
 Miss Fran Hanrahan.....
 Mr. Les Hanrahan.....

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Editor:

Website: www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au Click on *Local Info. Search Environment.*

Meetings are held at the Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Depart from Ballarat Market Place (formerly Creswick Plaza) Creswick Rd., Ballarat (VicRoads 255 M10) at 9.30 am unless otherwise specified.

A monthly publication of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc.
 Incorporation # A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135